



U.S. Department of Justice

Carlie Christensen

**United States Attorney
District of Utah**

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**CONTACT: MELODIE RYDALCH
801-325-3206
801-243-6475 (CELL)**

NEWS RELEASE
***DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE RELEASES FIRST
NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR CHILD EXPLOITATION
PREVENTION AND INTERDICTION***

***Utah U.S. Attorney's Office to increase focus on child exploitation,
child abuse cases on Native American reservations***

SALT LAKE CITY – The Department of Justice released its first ever National Strategy for Child Exploitation Prevention and Interdiction Monday. The strategy provides the first ever comprehensive threat assessment of the dangers facing children from child pornography, online enticement, child sex tourism, commercial sexual exploitation, and sexual exploitation in Indian Country, and outlines a blueprint to strengthen the fight against these crimes.

The national strategy, announced by Attorney General Eric Holder at a press conference in Washington, D.C., Monday morning, builds upon the department's accomplishments in combating child exploitation by establishing specific, aggressive goals and priorities and increasing cooperation and collaboration at all levels of government and the private sector.

"Although we've made meaningful progress in protecting children across the country, and although we've brought a record number of offenders to justice in recent years, it is time to renew our commitment to this work. It is time to intensify our efforts," said Attorney General Holder. "This new Strategy provides the roadmap necessary to do just that – to streamline our education, prevention and prosecution activities; to improve information sharing and collaboration; and to make the most effective use of limited resources. Together, we are sending an important message – that the U.S. government, and our nation's Department of Justice, has never been more committed to protecting our children and to bringing offenders to justice."

U.S. Attorney for Utah Carlie Christensen said that since Project Safe Childhood was launched four years ago, investigations and prosecutions of those who sexually exploit children have increased dramatically. “Our law enforcement and prosecution partners in Utah have contributed significantly to the success of Project Safe Child in Utah,” Christensen said. “However, the National Strategy for Child Exploitation Prevention and Interdiction reminds us that we must build on these efforts to reduce and ultimately prevent the exploitation of children,” Christensen said.

Christensen said the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Utah will expand its efforts in several areas, including an increased focus on the sexual exploitation and abuse of children on Native American reservations. The office has received two new Assistant U.S. Attorney positions which will be filled as soon as possible to help with the efforts. One new Assistant U.S. Attorney will prosecute Indian Country crimes. The second new Assistant U.S. Attorney will handle child exploitation prosecutions, Christensen said.

“One of the most challenging problems we face in our work with Native American tribes is child sexual abuse,” Christensen said. “There are several risk factors that combine to magnify the impact and occurrence of child sexual abuse in tribal communities, such as geographical isolation, unemployment, substance abuse, and poverty. While we can’t solve all of these issues, we can and will work with tribal leaders to identify steps that can be taken to reduce incidences of child exploitation.”

Indictments were returned by a Utah grand jury last week in two child sexual exploitation cases originating on the Navajo Nation reservation.

Marvell Begay, age 21, of Aneth, is charged in a four-count indictment with aggravated sexual abuse of a child and sexual abuse of a minor while within Indian Country. Begay was arraigned on the charge Thursday. He was detained pending trial following a detention hearing Monday afternoon in federal court. The first count of the indictment alleges Begay engaged in a sexual act with a child under the age of 12. The remaining three counts allege he engaged in a sexual act with another child between 12 and 16 years old. Begay faces a potential life sentence with a 30-year mandatory minimum sentence if he is convicted of the charges.

Jason Lamour Keith, age 32, of Aneth, is charged in a three-count indictment with aggravated sexual abuse of a child while within Indian Country. He was arraigned Thursday and was detained pending trial at a detention hearing Monday afternoon. The indictment alleges Keith engaged in sexual acts with a minor between 12-16 years old. He also faces a potential life sentence with a 30-year mandatory minimum sentence if he is convicted of the charges.

As part of the overall strategy, the U.S. Marshals Service is launching a nationwide operation targeting the top 500 most dangerous, non-compliant sex offenders in the nation.

U.S. Marshals in Utah have just completed a week-long sex offender initiative on tribal lands in the Uintah Basin and on the Navajo Nation in southern Utah. The Marshals made compliance checks of all known registered sex offenders, recorded their residences by GPS location, and made official notification to the offenders. The effort in southern Utah was a joint project with the District of Arizona. James A. Thompson, Chief Deputy Marshal in Utah, says 204 individuals were contacted in Utah as a part of this operation. Recent compliance checks of 268 registered sex offenders in Utah County and West Jordan also were made by the Marshals.

“Protecting our children continues to be a strong priority for us,” Thompson said. “We will continue to aggressively enforce the laws that protect children and pursue prosecutions where appropriate.”

Additionally, the Department of Justice will create a national database to allow federal, state, tribal, local and international law enforcement partners to deconflict their cases with each other, engage in undercover operations from a portal facilitated or hosted by the database, share information and intelligence and conduct analysis on dangerous offenders and future threats and trends.

The national strategy first analyzed the threat to the nation’s children and described the current efforts at all levels of the government against this threat. Since FY 2006, the Department of Justice has filed 8,464 Project Safe Childhood (PSC) cases against 8,637 defendants. In the District of Utah, about 360 PSC cases have been filed since 2006. These cases include prosecutions of online enticement of children to engage in sexual activity, interstate transportation of children to engage in sexual activity, production, distribution and possession of child pornography, and other offenses.

“We will continue to use the significant federal tools we have to bring justice to those individuals who exploit children. These are crimes that will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law,” Christensen said.

Recent Utah cases include:

Jimmy Joe Swartz, age 44, of Salt Lake City was sentenced to 210 months in federal prison July 12, 2010, after pleading guilty in November to two counts of transporting a minor for unlawful sexual activity. Swartz admitted he transported the minor from Utah to Washington and back and engaged in sexual acts with her on three occasions during the trip.

John Metcalf, age 34, of Tremonton, was sentenced to 10 years in federal prison after pleading guilty to possession of child pornography. The 10-year sentence is the statutory-maximum sentence for possession of child pornography. Metcalf admitted he had at least 10 images of child pornography on his computer hard drives. The images were found on electronic media at his workplace after he was no longer employed at the company. Metcalf is currently serving a sentence in the Utah State Prison for two

convictions of forcible sexual abuse. His federal sentence will run consecutive to his state sentence.

Douglas Scott Bessinger, age 47, of Logan, was charged in a two-count indictment returned July 21, 2010, with possession of child pornography and distribution of child pornography. Bessinger was arraigned July 22, 2010. The judge, who found Bessinger to be a risk of nonappearance and a danger to the community, ordered him detained pending trial. He faces up to 10 years in prison for the possession charge and up to 20 years in prison, with a five-year mandatory minimum, for the distribution count. Defendants charged in indictments are presumed innocent unless or until proven guilty in court.

Despite vigorously fighting all aspects of child exploitation, the department recognized that more work remains to be done. To that end, the department's strategy lays out goals to increase coordination among the nation's investigators, better train investigators and prosecutors, advance law enforcement's technological capabilities and enhance research to inform decisions on deterrence, incarceration and monitoring. The strategy also includes a renewed commitment to public awareness and community outreach.

As part of its public outreach efforts, the department today re-launched ProjectSafeChildhood.gov, the Project Safe Childhood (PSC) public website. PSC is a department initiative launched in 2006 that aims to combat the proliferation of technology-facilitated sexual exploitation crimes against children. Led by U.S. Attorneys' Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, PSC marshals federal, state, tribal and local resources to better locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as to identify and rescue victims.

For more information regarding the National Strategy to Combat Child Exploitation, Prevention and Interdiction, please visit www.projectsafekidhood.gov/docs/natstrategyreport.pdf.

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